British home vs. Russian home

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# Introduction

House is essential for man's life. A house serves as a shelter and a place to satisfy all our needs: we sleep, eat, hide ourselves from bad weather, store personal property, work and rest there. So we want not just a house but a home. So what is the difference between a house and a home? It is considered that the place where you live is your home whatever type of house it is. British speakers often say that your home is the place where you belong and feel comfortable, so it is more than just a house. Some people think of home in terms of where they grew up or where they lived. For them it is a place that brings back old memories or feelings. The state of a person's home can physiologically influence his or her behavior, emotions, and mental health. Some people may become homesick when they are separated from their home environment.

There are a lot of proverbs and sayings supporting the importance of home to a person: East or West, home is best; There is no place like home; My house is my fortress; Home, sweet home; Home is where the heart is; Home is home, though it be never so homely; Dry bread at home is better than roast meat abroad and many others. Such sayings exist in any language and in any culture. Houses differ from one culture to another, depending on the world outlook of a certain community, which has its roots in the religion of a nation, its traditions and historic heritage. That is why there are so many types of houses and ways of life in the world. There are certain cultures in which members lack permanent homes, such as with nomadic people.

A person's home can tell us what culture he belongs to, because consciously or unconsciously, one usually keeps to one's native traditions, though it is rather difficult to do so in the modern world, especially in the city.

# Houses in Britain

An Englishman's motto is 'My home is my castle.' A house doesn't only ensure privacy or give a sense of stability and security, but it is also a status symbol. A big and expensive house means that its owner is a very successful person. There are different types of houses in Britain. For example, a terraced house is a house joined to a row of other houses. A semi-detached house is joined to another house. The British dream of living in a detached house (which means a separate building) though having a detached house is much more expensive than a semi-detached or a terraced one. A cottage is a small, usually old house, typically in a rural, or semi-rural location. A bungalow is a fairly modern house built on only one level. Most people don't like blocks of flats, because they don't suit British attitudes and don't give people enough privacy. Besides many blocks of flats are badly built and are associated with poverty and crime.

Nowadays some people prefer living in a houseboat. It is a boat designed to be used as a human dwelling. In the United Kingdom, canal narrowboats are used as homes and also as mobile, rented, holiday accommodation. Over 15,000 people live afloat in Great Britain. They are found throughout the canals, rivers and coasts; in cities, in the country and in harbours. Some cruise continuously, some are permanently moored and the others mix cruising and mooring. Many people find houseboats very attractive because they can stay in one area for a few weeks or months and than move somewhere else. It helps them feel closer to Nature and escape from everyday problems of life ashore.

There are 22 million homes in Britain — big homes and small homes, old cottages and new buildings. Living in a house can be called one of very significant British traditions. British people love their homes and consider their home to be their castle. Most British people are fond of gardens, and this is one reason why so many of them prefer to live in houses rather than flats.

It is difficult to generalize about how British people use the various rooms in their houses. They may like the idea of tradition, but they are too individualistic to follow the same traditional habits. The only safe generalization is that, in a house with two floors, the rooms upstairs are the ones used as bedrooms. The toilet (often separate) and bathroom are also usually upstairs. The living room(s) and kitchen are downstairs. The latter is usually small, but those who can afford the space often like to have a 'farm house kitchen ', big enough for the family to eat in. Class divisions are sometimes involved in the names used for rooms. With living rooms, for example, the terms 'sitting room ' and ' drawing room' are regarded as upper-middle class, while 'lounge' is regarded as lower class. 'From room ' and 'back room' are also sometimes looked down on.

Just as the British idea of home is a mental concept as much as a physical reality, so is their idea of domestic comfort. The important thing is to feel cosy - that is, to create an atmosphere which seems warm even if it isn't really warm. This desire usually has priority over aesthetic concerns, which is why the British also have a reputation for bad taste. Most people would rather buy several items of cheap, mass-produced furniture, with chairs and sofas covered in synthetic material, than one more beautiful and more physically comfortable item. The same is true with regard to ornaments – if you want to be cosy, you have to fill the room up.

To many tradition is part of cosiness, and this can be suggested by being surrounded by old items of furniture. Moreover, if you cannot have furniture which is old, you can always have other things that suggest age. The open fire is an example. In Britain, it is regarded by many as very desirable to have a 'real fire ' (as it is often called). It is the perfect traditional symbol of warmth because it is what most people used in the past to keep warm. So strong is the attract ion of a 'real fire' that many houses have an imitation open fire, complete with plastic coal which glows red when it is switched on.

Most older houses, even very small ones, have not one but two general living rooms (which estate agents call 'reception rooms '). This arrangement maintains privacy (which is linked to cosiness). It allows the front room to be kept for comparatively formal visits, while family members and close friends can spend their time, safely hidden from public view, in the back room. Most modern smaller houses are built with just one living room (and in some older houses the two reception rooms have been converted into one). However, privacy must be preserved so these houses normally have a ' hall' on to which the front door opens. It is rare for it to open straight onto the living room. Some houses also have a tiny 'porch', with its own door, through which people pass before getting to the hall - an extra line of defense. The same concern can be seen where there is both a front door and a back door. Even if both can be reached from the street, the back door is for family and close friends only.

# Houses in Russia

One of the biggest factors in Moscow’s high cost of living is the cost of rent, which can easily be anywhere from $2500 to $4500 for foreign residents. After the fall of communism many citizens received ownership of their apartments which had formerly been owned by the state or their employer. This allows many Muscovites to live rent free and pay only building maintenance and the utilities.

The Soviet policy of providing mandatory housing for every citizen and the rapid growth of the city during these times led to the construction of enormous, plain housing blocks. Many of these buildings have been poorly maintained and are fairly unattractive in both style and function.

The concept of “single homes” per family is not something easily found in Russia. Under the old Soviet system everyone was housed in apartments that were amazingly similar.

The idea of “personal space” was considered anti-revolutionary and Soviet authorities worked hard to make life to be the same from block to block, city to city.

So, how does the real estate market work in Russia? Most Russians live in apartments, or flats.

When compared to many homes in the West, Russian apartments can seem to be rather small on the inside. Russians don’t count the kitchen and bath areas as “rooms”. A two-room apartment, for example, is an apartment with a kitchen, bath area, and two rooms for living/sleeping.

Instead of separate bedrooms and living rooms, most rooms will be multipurpose. Usually the largest room in an apartment is considered to be the living room by day, dining room in evening, and a bedroom at night.

Where do Russians sleep? European style sofa beds are quite comfortable and offer a good rest. Often L-shaped, there are no sagging springs, but instead a solid bottom section pulls out at night to form a very comfortable bed.

Many homes use a small table which can be folded over from both ends to create a nice size dining room table. This room is also the dining room where the family will gather for a meal and entertain guests in the evenings.

Kitchens are usually smaller than found in most Western homes, but they can be very functional. Sinks are usually single instead of double, and in older apartments you, or a family member, serve as the dishwasher.

A dacha is a seasonal or year-round second home, often located in the [exurbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exurb) of [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) and other [post-Soviet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Former_Soviet_Union) cities. A [cottage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottage) or [shack](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shack) serving as a family's main or only home, or an outbuilding, is not considered a dacha, although recently purpose-built dachas have been converted to year-round residences, and vice versa. In some cases, dachas are occupied for part of the year by their owners and rented out to urban residents as summer retreats. People on dachas are colloquially called dachniks (the term usually refers not only to presence on dacha, but to a whole distinctive lifestyle. The Russian term is often said to have no exact counterpart in English.

Dachas are very common in [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia), and are also widespread in most parts of the [former Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Former_Soviet_Union) and some countries of the former [Eastern Bloc](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Bloc). It was estimated that in 1995 about 50% of Russian families living in large cities have dachas. Most dachas are in colonies of dachas and garden plots near large cities, that have existed since the Soviet era, which consist of numerous small, typically 600 square meters, land plots. They were initially intended only as recreation getaways of city dwellers and for the purpose of growing small gardens for food. Dachas are used today for [fishing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fishing), [hunting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunting), and other leisure activities, and growing garden crops remains popular, still seen as an important part of dacha life.

Dachas originated as small country estates gifted by the tsar, and have been popular among the upper and middle classes ever since. During the Soviet era, many dachas were state-owned, and were given to the elite of the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_of_the_Soviet_Union) (CPSU). State dachas (gosdacha) continue to be owned by the government of the Russian Federation, for use by the president and other officials. They were extremely popular in the Soviet Union, because people did not have an opportunity to buy land and build a house where they wanted, and also because they lacked other opportunities to spend their time and money.

As the size and type of dacha buildings for ordinary people was severely restricted during the Soviet time, permitted features such as large attics or glazed verandas, became extremely widespread and often oversized. In the period from the 1960s to 1985, these limitations were especially strict: only single-story [summer houses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_house) without permanent heating and with living areas less than 60 sq m (646 sq ft) were allowed as second housing (though older dachas that did not meet these requirements continued to exist). In the 1980s, the rules were loosened, and since 1990, all such limitations have been eliminated.

Dacha plots are usually not more than 600 square meters in area; in some cases over 1,200 or 1,500 square meters, but nearly never exceeding 0.96 ha (2.4 acres). They therefore are too small to grow any large amount of fruits and vegetables, thus sometimes they are also grown on separate dedicated plots of ground nearby. In Soviet times and sometimes now, such dedicated plots of ground were often made of the unused sections of agricultural fields owned by [collective farms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_farms). Many small dacha plots, especially those that were recently purchased, are not used for large-scale fruit and vegetable farming. Instead, they are frequently used for [gardening](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gardening) and planting exotic plants.

Due to custom and the perceived high costs of good equipment, even relatively large plots of land are often cultivated manually using equipment such as a spade or a spading fork. In autumn the grown potatoes and other crops are gathered and transported to the city where they are stored in cellars, dugouts (usually located on unused plots of ground), or in personal automobile garages.

Many Russians prefer to grow vegetables themselves because of the widespread belief in the excessive use of agrochemicals in the vegetables from supermarkets and grocery stores, and the higher costs of the vegetables in stores and [bazaars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bazaar), especially among the older part of the population. Also, growing one's own food supplies is a long-lived Russian tradition practised even by many affluent Russians. It is seen as a way to have a connection to the land, to be self-sufficient, and for many, to find some escape from a capitalist economy. While a large portion of urban Russians grow some vegetables in their dacha gardens, the perception in some parts of society that urban Russians are becoming increasingly self-sufficient is a myth, and only some 15 percent of vegetables are grown by urban dwellers.

The most common dacha fruits in cool temperate regions of Russia are [apple](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apple), [blackcurrant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackcurrant), [redcurrant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redcurrant), [gooseberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gooseberry), [raspberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raspberry) and [strawberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strawberry) (sometimes also [blackberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackberry) and [grape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grape), but many of them are either rare or not hardy enough and require winter protection). Popular vegetables and herbs are [potato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potato), [cucumber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cucumber), [zucchini](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zucchini), [pumpkin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumpkin), [tomato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato), [carrot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carrot), [beetroot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beetroot), [cabbage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabbage), [cauliflower](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cauliflower), [radish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radish), [turnip](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turnip), [onion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onion), [garlic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garlic), [dill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dill), [parsley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsley), [rhubarb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhubarb) and [sorrel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sorrel).

# Conclusion

A house can say much about its inhabitants: their way of life, tastes, financial position, etc. No matter what type of house a person has, he should feel comfortable there. As a rule one's house is associated with one's family. Living under one roof people become closer and begin to understand each other better. So we can say that a house unites and for every person his house is a small Universe, a sacred place where love, friendship, mutual understanding and mutual respect reign.

Some people call themselves the citizens of the world, some people say they don’t have home or they even don’t need it. In my opinion, it’s a lie. It all depends on people, if they accept the place where they stay or live or not. It is a task for each of us – make the place where we stay more comfortable, cozy, homey and appropriate for us. I think, if you really do your best and try to adapt yourself, you feel better. It is a kind of atmosphere that you create around yourself. Don’t you start smiling and relax, when you get home? Each of us does. And don’t you say it is a weakness or something. It is just a place where you can really feel free from all the stress you had during the day.

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